

SPORT

De Kruif factor 'sparks' booters

SPORTS REPORTER



Lodewijk de Kruif's arrival has seemingly sparked the Bangladesh national team as they notched up a morale-boosting 3-1 win against Sheikh Jamal DC in their second practice match in BKSP yesterday. Having gone down 0-2 against Abahani last week, the team's preparation for the six-nation invitational tournament was called into serious question. However, de Kruif taking charge from interim coach Saiful Bari Titu on Saturday, the national team bounced back to beat the premier league champions, who were fielding a few national players alongside six foreign players.

Veteran striker Zahid Hasan Emily scored twice in the first half before Sheikh Jamal conceded an own goal in the second half. Haitian recruit Lui Neon deposited one back for the premier league champions, but the national team ran out comfortable winners.

It is often said that our players fail to summon serious motivation under local coaches but show more obedience when a foreign coach takes charge. Skipper Mamunul Islam, at a press conference at the BFF House earlier yesterday, retorted how de Kruif's presence has boosted them.

"We had missed the coach (de Kruif). His joining has inspired us and as we have developed a good understanding with him over the course of his tenure," said the Bangladesh skipper.

Mamunul feels the players are full of confidence and the onus is on them to deliver the goods in the tournament.

"The Bangabandhu Gold Cup is happening after 16 years and we have taken the challenge to reach the semifinals. Our results will go a long way to making sure that this tournament continues to be held in the following years," said the 27-year-old midfielder.

De Kruif was not so forthright in setting a specific target for the tournament, but insisted that they can't think of anything other than winning each match. The Dutchman hinted that they should be the favourites against the other team of the group, Sri Lanka, in their second match.

"Our target is to win every match. Most teams in this tournament are higher ranked than us, but we have to challenge ourselves. Our target is to win and with six points, we will be in the semifinals," added the Dutchman.

A 23-man Bangladesh squad - defenders Ariful Islam, Mohammad Linkon; midfielders Atikur Rahman Fahad, Rubel Mia and striker Aminur Rahman Sajib being omitted for the final squad yesterday -- will fly to Sylhet this afternoon ahead of their opening fixture against Malaysia U-23 team on January 29, before taking on Sri Lanka in Dhaka on February 2.

SQUAD

Liton (GK), Sohel (GK), Himel (GK); Nasir, Raihan, Topu, Nasirul, Yeasin, Meshu, Munna; Mamunul (C), Hemanta, Jamal, Sohel, Raju, Komol, Zahid, Shahed; Wahed, Emily, Mithun, Rony, Toklish.



Dhaka's Rony Talukdar plays one down to the square-leg boundary on his way to an unbeaten 103 at Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Rony, Sharif power Dhaka

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There appears to be no end to Rony Talukdar's run-spree at the moment. After catapulting himself to the top of the run-scorers' list in the Dhaka Premier League, where he hammered 714 runs, he began his journey in the National Cricket League with an unbeaten century at Mirpur yesterday.

The four-day domestic competition which began yesterday witnessed three centuries on the opening day. Apart from Talukdar, Mehedi Maruf hammered 141 for Dhaka Metro to take his side past the 300-mark, while former national player Naeem Islam scored 107 to save Rangpur's blushes.

Talukdar scored 103 off 117 deliveries, an innings which saw him smack 15 boundaries. His partner, Abdul Majid was in similar form. He raised an unbeaten 70 to take Dhaka to a powerful 180 for no loss after bundling out a wayward Barisal for just 139.

While Talukdar and Abdul did dispatch bowlers all over the park, the day belonged to

SCORES IN BRIEF

BARISAL: 139 all out in 50.3 overs (Fazle 52; Sharif 6-24, Shahadat 2-40)
DHAKA: 180 for no loss (Rony 103 not out, Abdul 70 not out)
KHULNA: 280 for 4 (Imrul 63, Amit 60; Alok 1-22, Ahmed 1-54)
RANGPUR: 218 for 8 (Naeem 107; Moniruzzaman 3-38, Faisal 2-30)
DHAKA METRO: 302 all out in 85.1 overs (Mehedi 141; Sanjamul 4-98, Forhad 3-48)
RAJSHAHI: 8 for no loss (Mizanur 7)

former national pacer Mohammad Sharif, who scalped figures of 6 for 24 in his 100th first-class outing. The veteran bowler celebrated the landmark in the best possible way as he hit the timber twice to remove openers Avishkek Mitra and Shahriar Nafees. He then returned to mop up the tail with four quick wickets. From 100 for 5, Barisal crumbled to 139 in 50.3 overs.

After the exchange, the match resembled that of a Dhaka Premier League fixture with Talukdar smacking the deliveries with ease. The wide deliveries were punished powerfully

through the covers, while the straighter ones were at times defended and on other occasions were driven back past the bowler.

Seemingly in sublime touch, it won't be a surprise if Talukdar continues with as much aggression on Day Two.

The BKSP witnessed Khulna's top-order score four half-centuries to help them finish the first day on 280 for 4. After being asked to bat by Sylhet skipper Alok Kapali, Khulna's batsmen flourished as they reached 157 for 1 by lunch. Quick wickets in the middle of the day however dented their innings.

Rangpur were in trouble at Fatullah, after they were put in to bat by Chittagong. Skipper Nafees Iqbal's decision was rewarded as Rangpur crumbled to 127 for 6 in 60 overs. However, Naeem's watchful century -- he faced 239 deliveries -- helped them finish the day on 218 for 8, a slightly better note.

Maruf was Dhaka Metro's only player who managed to skilfully play Sanjamul Islam's slow left-armers at ground number three of the BKSP. He hit eleven fours and two sixes before eventually falling to Sanjamul, nine runs short of 150.

The unknown quantity

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Bangladesh coach Lodewijk de Kruif admitted the importance of the first match against Malaysia U-23 team in the opening fixture of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup on January 29 in Sylhet. The Dutchman conceded that he does not have a whole lot of information about this young Malaysian side, which has an average age of 21.

"I collected some DVDs of Malaysia senior side through my relatives but I don't have anything regarding their U-23 Malaysia team. However, we can get an idea as to which formation they employ and who are their star players since some of the U-23 players could be in the senior side too," de Kruif briefed reporters about his groundwork.

However, even if de Kruif gets an idea about the style of play, it will be hard to handpick any player from the senior side simply because none of these players have any senior international experience. In fact, only three players of this side were members of the Malaysian Olympic squad which took part in the Asian Games last year, losing all three of their group phase matches.

Playing down the apparent advantage of facing a young and relatively inexperienced side, de Kruif said that his job is to make sure the team gets the results.

"It doesn't make a lot of difference whether the teams are senior or U-23. At the end of the day, it's all about results," said de Kruif.

A positive result in the opening match will set the hosts in pole position to qualify for the last four from Group A, also including South Asian rivals Sri Lanka.



The Bangladesh U-19 team celebrate their come-from-behind victory over their Lankan counterparts, claiming the five-match series 3-2 yesterday after losing the first two games.

PHOTO: COURTESY

BD U-19s complete magical comeback

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh U-19 cricketers completed an outstanding comeback to seal the five-match one-day series 3-2 against their Sri Lankan counterparts at Colombo yesterday, after losing the first two matches.

In the final game yesterday, Nazmul Hossain Shanto scored 92, his fourth half-century of the tour, to take the visitors to 212.

Shanto was well supported by Zakir Hasan, who scored a cautious 42 at number five.

In reply the visitors, despite racing to 82 for no loss in the first 19 overs, were dismissed for 198 in 48.5 overs. Bangladesh's spinners scalped seven wickets to buckle the hosts down. 17-

year-old Saleh Ahmed took three wickets, while Sanjit Saha and captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz took two each. Pacer Mohammad Saifuddin took two wickets as well.

With 284 runs Shanto was the highest run-scorer of the series, while Sri Lanka pacer Asitha Fernando scalped 13 players to top the wickets column.

"The boys faced problems adjusting to the wicket initially and I guess that's why we lost the first two matches. But after they got an idea they stuck to it and did very well.

"We were ahead of them with regards to our spinners. I was also happy with the way Shanto and Miraz held our middle-order. We may have won but I feel that our pacers and our openers still have a lot of work to do," said coach Mizanur Rahman.

Turner's plan in 'few weeks'

SPORTS REPORTER

Ross Turner, the former ICC global development manager, who has been given the task of developing a four-year strategic plan for the Bangladesh Cricket Board, finished his first round of meetings with members of the board yesterday.

Speaking to reporters at Mirpur, Turner said that he had been asked to submit a preliminary plan in a few weeks, after which there would be more discussions with the board. The goal, according to him, was to create a clear and concise plan for the organisation to follow.

"Over the past three days I had meetings with the relevant heads of departments to gather information. The purpose of coming here was to listen carefully to the ideas and concepts in order to chalk out the plan.

"It's related to the evolution of Bangladesh's cricket. When Bangladesh became a full-member nation, the key considerations were the need for high quality playing facilities and stadiums. Moving beyond that, the next phase will work towards developing the game in all parts of the country," explained Turner.

Bangladesh lose against Ukraine too

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Bangladesh finished sixth in the eight-team Hockey World League (Round-2) in Singapore after losing 1-3 against Ukraine in their last place-deciding match yesterday. The team in red and green failed to mount any challenge against the European side which lies five places above Bangladesh in the latest world ranking.

Bangladesh conceded a field goal in the fourth minute of the match before conceding the second from a penalty stroke in the 22nd minute. Bangladesh skipper Krishno Kumar pulled one back from a penalty corner in the 39th minute, but the Ukrainians made it 3-1 from a penalty corner in the 55th minute.

Bangladesh had won only one of their three group stage matches against Mexico and a preliminary place-deciding match against Singapore. In the previous edition of the Hockey World League (Round-2) held in New Delhi in 2013, Bangladesh had finished third behind India and Ireland and ahead of China, Oman and Fiji.

TIGERS' VENUES DOWN UNDER



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NAJMUN NOOR

Stat indicators weigh in for batting first at the Adelaide Oval. More ODIs have been won batting first and particularly for teams that chose to after winning the toss. In 49 games spanning 35 years, 27 were won by sides winning the toss and choosing to bat. Both sides will be wary. Bangladesh will look to pull off a repeat upset win when they meet England here on March 9. And England, clearly an overhauled and revamped side that have not hesitated to axe a player or two of iconic stature to solidify their ODI mould, have bigger ambitions in mind. For Bangladesh to cause an upset, any semblance of a weak or underperforming side among proverbial "Goliaths" in Pool A, England could be fair game. Hopes can be pinned on individual performances that the Bangladeshi players are capable of.

The author is a marketing professional from the airline and telecommunications industry. He is a former Bangladeshi national cricket player.

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